

Light the Artwork

notes

Spread It Out

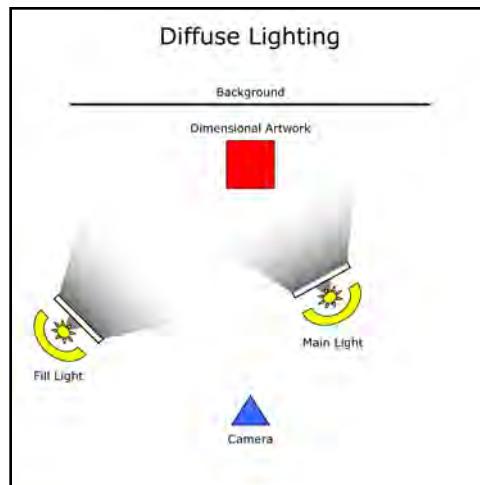
The photos of your dimensional artwork likely will be improved with softer lighting—so spread it out.

Diffuse Lighting

With the basic lighting setup for dimensional artwork, the light sources are relatively small. This results in well-defined shadows with relatively distinct edges on both the work and the background.

Although this look can complement angular or more robust works, strong shadows may be distracting for other pieces—particularly softer or more delicate ones.

The solution is to diffuse the light, which makes the light source larger and softens the shadows as a result. Diffusion also can reduce the glare and “hot spots” on jewelry, glazed ceramics, or other reflective work.



Diffusing the Light

There are just a couple of basic types of diffusers.

The first is a “softbox”, which attaches a translucent white fabric panel to the front of the light. The fabric acts to spread out the light.

Alternatively, jewelry or small items can be placed inside a tabletop “light tent” made of white fabric or frosted plastic that surrounds the piece on all sides and softens the light.

Or you can easily make your own diffuser. Simply attach white nylon or polyester fabric or a piece of translucent white plastic to a frame and position it between the lights and the artwork.



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Put It All Together

You can see the result of combining the different lighting techniques I've described in this photo.

Start with uneven lighting to show the form of the work. Add the back light to separate the background from the art. Then diffuse the lighting for softer shadows.

Use all three techniques together to get the best images of your dimensional artwork!



Lighting Your Dimensional Art

1. Set up a piece of dimensional artwork with two lights at the same distance from the piece and take a photo.
2. Move one of the lights closer to the art and take a second photo. Do you see a difference between the two images? Yes No If yes, describe it here:
3. Add a third "back light" and take another photo. Do you see a difference with this image? Yes No If yes, describe it here:
4. Examine the shadows on the artwork and the background. Are the shadows satisfactory? Yes No Why is that?
5. Now set up to diffuse the light using one of the methods described here and take another photo. Do you see a difference in the shadows with this image? Yes No If yes, describe it here:
6. Experiment with different placements of the three lights and the diffusion and take another photo with each setup, being sure to note the details.
7. Compare the images and identify which setup provides the most satisfactory lighting of your artwork.
8. Make any notes about your preferred lighting setup here: